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NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

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ART. I. — *History of the Administration of* PRESIDENT LINCOLN ;
including his Speeches, Letters, Addresses, Proclamations,
and Messages. With a Preliminary Sketch of his Life. By
HENRY J. RAYMOND. New York : J. C. Derby and N. C.
Miller. 1864. 12mo. pp. 496.

THE character of the man chosen to be President of the United States for the next four years is of importance to the nation only secondary to that of the moral and political principles involved in his election. He is not merely the representative of these principles, but upon him mainly depends the direction of the policy by which they are to be expressed and maintained in the acts of administration. And now that the people have decided the question at issue in the election in conformity with the dictates of honor and good sense ; — now that they have decided that the national integrity must be preserved ; that the constitutional rights of the majority must be maintained ; that no price is too great to be paid for that Union which is the condition of national existence, dignity, and strength ; that Rebellion must be punished, and slavery, the source of Rebellion, extirpated ; that lasting peace must be secured by victory, and not by surrender ; — and since by this decision they have reaffirmed the fundamental principles of American democracy, and have reasserted their devotion to justice and liberty as embodied in the national institutions, — there is reason for the heartiest satisfaction that the character of Abraham

Lincoln, upon whom more than upon any other man devolves the responsibility of giving effect to the popular will, has been already tried, and has proved worthy of the new trust which has been committed to him.

The period during which Mr. Lincoln has been President has tested him by altogether extraordinary circumstances. But the very storm and pressure of events, which have tried and proved the real qualities of the man, have also created such general excitement of feeling as to render the formation of a fair and impartial judgment of his course a matter of difficulty even for the coolest and most candid observers. Political passion and prejudice have dimmed the vision and distorted the views of men. The invidious scrutiny of vehement opponents has been exercised to discover faults, or their malignity has been employed in inventing them, while the zeal of no less vehement partisans has been displayed with scarcely less injurious effect in the exaggeration of merits or the denial of mistakes in judgment or in action. To be misrepresented is the penalty of one who holds exalted office. The President lives in a terrible publicity. His looks, his words, his deeds, are constantly supplying material for the fancy of friends or enemies to work upon. Frankness is a risk for him, reserve is hardly less dangerous. Simplicity of heart is no protection against those who are ready to suspect sincerity itself of being double-minded. Good faith and good humor afford no safeguard against misinterpretation. But all this is only the old complaint and the familiar vice of courts, aggravated by the peculiar conditions of American public life. Amid the perils of the Rebellion, and under the burden of cares of state, Mr. Lincoln might many times have exclaimed, with Henry VI. :

“How will the country, for these woful chances,
Mis-think the king, and not be satisfied !”

But in spite of misrepresentations, innocent or designed, and putting aside all rumor, and all that rests on hearsay and report, there has been during the term of Mr. Lincoln's Presidency a steady accumulation of material for judgment, until at length it has become sufficient for the formation of an estimate, if not complete, at least accurate as far as it goes, of his motives and character. A man is to be judged by the current of his

life. No fair opinion can be reached by the analysis of single acts ; and after a careful, deliberate, and serious review of Mr. Lincoln's course during the past four years, we do not hesitate to say that there is no statesman in America to whose hands the great authority and power of the Presidency could be more fitly or confidently committed. And in saying this, we do not disregard the fact, that the affairs of the nation during the next four years will demand the highest statesmanship in the men called upon to direct them. The questions which returning peace and the re-establishment of the government will bring up for determination will be no less perplexing than those which have attended the course of the war. To restore the state, to settle the Union upon the firm foundations of order, will be a task requiring the best wisdom. It is vain to attempt to predict the exact form in which these questions will present themselves, but upon their correct solution depends the future welfare of the nation ; and they will, we may be sure, be debated with an earnestness of feeling proportioned to their importance. And it is plain that what we have hitherto been but imperfectly as a nation, we are to become thoroughly. America is to become more American. We have passed the period of experiment. We have met, resisted, and overcome the worst perils. Prosperity and adversity have alike instructed us in the worth of our institutions, have alike confirmed our confidence in the genuine principles of democracy, and strengthened our faith in popular government.

We are now entering upon an era in which the political principles which are distinctively American, as having been here, for the first time in the history of the world, deliberately established as the foundation of a great, free political community, are to have fuller scope and new development. The principles themselves are as old as the moral nature of man ; for they are simply the expression of the natural rights of man in society. The political equality of men, their right to equal justice and freedom, their right to self-government, their right to every means of self-development consistent with the general welfare, — these are the essence of the American system of democracy. To give to these principles their broadest applications, to embody these rights in practical measures, to

harmonize special acts of administration with the general system, is the duty of those intrusted with the power of the state. The men who are most fully possessed by the spirit of our system, the men who have most confidence in it, are those to whose hands the administration of the general government may most safely be committed; and there has never been a statesman in America more thoroughly in sympathy with the best interests of the American people, or more completely imbued with reverence for those ideas of justice, freedom, and humanity which inspire American institutions, than Abraham Lincoln. Indeed, one great source of the mis-estimate in which he is held by many persons in the community not opposed to him as partisans, and of the attacks upon him by the misnamed Democratic party of the present day, arises from the fact that there is a large class of Americans by birth or adoption, including the larger part of the spurious Democratic party, who are not Americans in principle. They have inherited prepossessions from the past; they belong to the old world of class-privilege, of inequality, of unjust political distinctions. They breathe with difficulty the free air of the new world. Their souls are not open to the inspiring and ennobling doctrines on which the future is to be builded fair. The revilings which have been shouted from Richmond, — the cries of "Ape," "Monster," "Imbecile," — revilings repeated by the low ministers of faction at the North, — are but the ribaldry in which the offscourings of an aristocracy based upon the denial of human rights display their hatred of those principles of democracy of which Mr. Lincoln is the worthy representative.

By birth, by education, by sympathy, Mr. Lincoln is of the people. His training has been in the popular school. He is an American in the best sense; and it is a circumstance beyond measure fortunate, that a man of this stamp should be at the head of affairs at a juncture so critical as the present, and during a period in which American principles are, as we have said, to receive new developments and wider application.

The prevailing quality of Mr. Lincoln as a statesman is his confidence, as he has himself expressed it, in "government of the people, by the people, for the people." From his first expression as President, this has been his ruling idea. In the

brief address that he delivered at Indianapolis on the day that he left Springfield to go to Washington, — the 11th of February, 1861, — he said, in words of the depth of whose meaning even he at that time was but partially conscious, “Of the people, when they rise in mass in behalf of the Union and of the liberties of their country, truly may it be said, ‘The gates of hell cannot prevail against them’ ”; and he concluded his address with the words, “I appeal to you again to constantly bear in mind that with you, and not with politicians, not with Presidents, not with office-seekers, but with you, rests the question, Shall the Union, and shall the liberties of this country, be preserved to the latest generation ?” Again and again, in the short speeches made by him during his journey to Washington, he dwelt on this idea. “It is with you, the people, to advance the great cause of Union and the Constitution.” “I am sure I bring a heart true to the work. For the ability to perform it, I must trust in that Supreme Being who has never forsaken this favored land, through the instrumentality of this great and intelligent people.” The same idea runs through the Inaugural Address, reappearing in various forms as it presents itself in connection with the different topics treated in that memorable discourse. “This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it.” “The chief magistrate derives all his authority from the people.” “Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people ? Is there any better or equal hope in the world ?”

There is indeed nothing particularly new in the manner of these statements, and nothing original in the idea of the supremacy of the people. The new and remarkable thing in them is, that whereas hitherto these ideas have been held with more or less sincerity and confidence by our statesmen, they are the groundwork of Mr. Lincoln’s political convictions ; they are the essence of his political creed. The importance to the country of having a man in the Presidential chair during the Rebellion who was thoroughly and practically in earnest in holding these doctrines, is hardly to be over-estimated ; for the events of this period have required such an appeal to be made by the government to the people as was never before demanded, and the course of the government on some of the

most important questions of policy has displayed an absolute confidence in the satisfactory answer that the people would make to their appeal. The nation was worthy of this confidence ; and the past four years have done more than any similar period in our history to develop its trust in itself, and to convert not merely our politicians, but the whole people, from theoretical democratic republicans into practical believers in the rights of man, and in the power and virtue of an intelligent democracy.

No man can have such democratic instincts and principles as Mr. Lincoln has manifested, without being possessed with a strong devotion to liberty, and to the justice which is a component part of the idea of freedom. For a generation, at least, the large idea of liberty as a principle of conservatism and development has been greatly lost sight of in the narrower views which have grown out of the conflict in regard to slavery. Freedom has been opposed to slavery as if it were its contrary, as if it were little more than a merely destructive power. Our Northern statesmen have for the most part given themselves up to the argument against slavery, rather than to the argument for liberty. Had their devotion to liberty been equal to their zeal or their professions against slavery, the South could never have won those civil and political victories which encouraged her at length to try the force of arms.

Mr. Lincoln has throughout his public career been a consistent and steadfast opponent of slavery, not merely on the ground of the evil intrinsic to the institution, but mainly on the ground of its incompatibility with the free institutions of the country. The famous opening sentences of his speech at Springfield, Ill., on the 17th of June, 1858, contain the gist of his doctrine on the subject. “ ‘ A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot permanently endure half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved, — I do not expect the house to fall, — but I *do* expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other.” The speech that contained these words was delivered, it should be remembered, some time before Mr. Seward, by his speech at Rochester, made the doctrine of the “ irrepressible conflict ” familiar to the people of the country.

In a speech at Independence Hall on the 21st of February, 1861, on his journey to Washington, Mr. Lincoln said, speaking of the Colonies during the Revolution: "I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that kept this confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of the separation of the Colonies from the mother land, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but, I hope, to the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weight would be lifted from the shoulders of all men." The Declaration of Independence, thus interpreted, is the inspiration of Mr. Lincoln's political faith. It is impossible for him to dissociate from his confidence in the people as the source of all authority, and as competent to rule themselves, his equal confidence that "nothing stamped with the Divine image and likeness was sent into the world to be trodden on and degraded and imbruted by its fellows." In declaring the truths with which the Declaration of Independence opens to be self-evident, the signers of that charter but gave expression, to use Mr. Lincoln's own words, to "their lofty and wise and noble understanding of the justice of the Creator to his creatures." And it is his strong sense of the fact that it is by these principles that the republic lives, and that by its existence it keeps them alive for the benefit of the world, which has directed his policy, and marked his utterances, in regard to the Rebellion whose object was "to overthrow this government, which was built on the foundation of human rights, and to substitute for it one which should rest exclusively on the basis of human slavery."

In his letter to the workingmen of London, on the 2d of February, 1863, Mr. Lincoln said: "The resources, advantages, and powers of the American people are very great; and they have consequently succeeded to equally great responsibilities. It seems to have devolved on them to test whether a government established on the principles of human freedom can be maintained against an effort to build one upon the exclusive foundation of human bondage." And in an address made to an Ohio regiment on its return home through Washington at the expiration of its term of service, on the 18th of

August last, he said, giving a brief but excellent definition of political equality: "I wish it might be more generally understood what the country is now engaged in. We have, as all will agree, a free government, where every man has *a right to be equal with every other man*. In this great struggle this form of government and every form of human right is endangered, if our enemies succeed. There is more involved in the contest than is realized by every one: there is involved in this struggle the question whether your children and my children shall enjoy the privileges we have enjoyed."

No man has seen more clearly or felt more deeply than Mr. Lincoln, that, whatever were the pretexts and motives of the Rebellion, and however we may name the cause in which we are contending, whether we call it a struggle for the integrity of the Union and the maintenance of the Constitution, or give it some other name, its essence is the defence of human rights against the attacks of those who practically deny them; and the issue is most distinctly joined on the point of the rights of labor. It is a struggle for the rights of labor, and for the form of government by which alone those rights can be securely maintained. It is on the preservation of these rights that the progress of the world in civilization depends. The freedom, the dignity, the intelligence of labor, are the tests of the true civilization of a community. Great refinement, great moral elevation, may be attained by individuals, even by classes, in a society where these rights are denied and withheld. But a society in which such a condition exists rests upon foundations that will assuredly prove insufficient, and will in time crumble away, to the destruction of whatever superstructure rests upon them. The excellence of a political society may be judged by the degree in which the rights of its humblest member are protected, and in which the benefits which flow from it may be shared by him. The true position of the laboring man in a free community, and the relations of labor to the other interests of society, have rarely been stated with more clearness than by the President in his Annual Message to Congress in December, 1861. He said: —

"It continues to develop that the insurrection is largely, if not exclusively, a war upon the first principle of popular government, — the rights of the people. Conclusive evidence of this is found in the most grave

and maturely considered public documents, as well as in the general tone of the insurgents. In those documents we find the abridgment of the existing right of suffrage, and the denial to the people of all right to participate in the selection of public officers, except the legislative, boldly advocated, with labored arguments to prove that large control of the people in government is the source of all political evil. Monarchy itself is sometimes hinted at as a possible refuge from the power of the people.

“In my present position I could scarcely be justified were I to omit raising a warning voice against this approach of returning despotism.

“It is not needed nor fitting here that a general argument should be made in favor of popular institutions; but there is one point with its connections, not so hackneyed as most others, to which I ask a brief attention. It is the effort to place *capital* on an equal footing, if not above *labor*, in the structure of government. It is assumed that labor is available only in connection with capital; that nobody labors unless somebody else, owning capital, somehow by the use of it induces him to labor. This assumed, it is next considered whether it is best that capital shall *hire* laborers, and thus induce them to work by their own consent, or *buy* them, and drive them to it without their consent. Having proceeded so far, it is naturally concluded that all laborers are either *hired* laborers or what we call slaves. And, further, it is assumed that whoever is once a hired laborer is fixed in that condition for life. Now there is no such relation between capital and labor as assumed, nor is there any such thing as a free man being fixed for life in the condition of a hired laborer. Both these assumptions are false, and all inferences from them are groundless.

“Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. Nor is it denied that there is, and probably always will be, a relation between capital and labor producing mutual benefits. The error is in assuming that the whole labor of a community exists within that relation. A few men own capital, and that few avoid labor themselves, and with their capital hire or buy another few to labor for them. A large majority belong to neither class, — neither work for others, nor have others working for them. In most of the Southern States a majority of the whole people of all colors are neither slaves nor masters; while in the Northern, a large majority are neither hirers nor hired. Men with their families — wives, sons, and daughters — work for themselves, on their farms, in their houses, and in their shops,

taking the whole product to themselves, and asking no favors of capital on the one hand nor of hired laborers or slaves on the other. It is not forgotten that a considerable number of persons mingle their own labor with capital ; that is, they labor with their own hands, and also buy or hire others to labor for them ; but this is only a mixed, and not a distinct class. No principle stated is disturbed by the existence of this mixed class.

“Again, as has already been said, there is not, of necessity, any such thing as the free hired laborer being fixed to that condition for life. Many independent men everywhere in these States, a few years back in their lives, were hired laborers. The prudent, pennyless beginner in the world labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all, gives hope to all, and consequent energy, and progress, and improvement of condition to all. No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty, — none less inclined to touch or take aught which they have not honestly earned. Let them beware of surrendering a political power which they already possess, and which, if surrendered, will surely be used to close the door of advancement against such as they, and to fix new disabilities and burdens upon them, till all of liberty shall be lost.”

In March, 1864, on receiving an address from the New York Workingmen’s Democratic Republican Association, Mr. Lincoln made a reply to the committee who represented the Association, in which he said : —

“You comprehend, as your address shows, that the existing Rebellion means more and tends to more than the perpetuation of African slavery ; that it is, in fact, a war upon the rights of all working people. Partly to show that this view has not escaped my attention, and partly that I cannot better express myself, I read a passage from the Message to Congress in December, 1861.”

After reading the extract which we have quoted, he added, in words full of good sense and wisdom, which display his characteristic skill in the art of “putting things” : —

“The views then expressed remain unchanged, nor have I much to add. None are so deeply interested to resist the present Rebellion as the working people. Let them beware of prejudices, working division and hostility among themselves. The most notable feature of a disturb-

ance in your city last summer was the hanging of some working people by other working people. It should never be so. The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people of all nations and tongues and kindreds. Nor should this lead to a war upon property or the owners of property. Property is the fruit of labor; property is desirable, is a positive good in the world. That some should be rich shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise. Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him labor diligently and build one for himself; thus by example assuring that his own shall be safe from violence when built."

Such words as these, simple, pointed, sincere, address the intelligence of the plain people. They are not to be misunderstood, and the character of the speaker gives to them additional weight. He is no mere theorist, no political schemer, giving utterance to popular or acceptable truths of which he is not convinced. The very form of his expressions, so markedly original and vigorous, indicates that the thoughts contained in them are his own, both by right of moral conviction and intellectual assimilation. Mr. Lincoln represents and contends for the democracy of free labor, in opposition to those at the North, as well as at the South, who regard the laboring classes as the "very mudsills of society and political government," and assert that "you might as well attempt to build a house in the air, as to build either one or the other except *on* the mudsills."

"But," it may be objected, "even if Mr. Lincoln has given evidence of possessing more deeply rooted and sincere convictions in respect to the source of authority in government, the rights of man, the nature of political liberty and justice, and the claims of labor, than any other American statesman, and admitting even that by birth, by education, by experience, his instincts and his principles are alike soundly democratic, and his whole nature in hearty sympathy with the best aspirations of the American people, admitting still further that he has a thorough comprehension of the American system of government, and an unalterable determination to maintain that system in its integrity, yet all this is not sufficient to make him a wise ruler of the nation. A man may have all good

principles and desires, and yet pursue a wrong policy. Integrity and intelligence are not enough in times of trial. To think well and to mean well are of no use, if a man knows not how to act well. Mr. Lincoln's administration for the past three years and more is the true test of his capacity and worthiness for his great office." We admit all this fully. But this only leads to the question, Has Mr. Lincoln's course of action as President, viewed broadly and estimated fairly, failed to correspond with his declared principles, or has he failed to perform the duties imposed upon him by his oath of office? And to this question the answer is to be found in the character of the specific charges brought against his administration.

In respect to many of these charges a final judgment has been rendered by the people at the polls. They have re-elected the man who, by the suspension of the *habeas corpus* and the suppression of newspapers, was, it is asserted, depriving them of their most precious rights, and establishing the worst despotism over them. The truth is, that however men may differ as to the necessity and policy of these and similar acts of Mr. Lincoln's administration, there is not an honest, sensible man in the Free States who considers any one of his personal or political rights to be in danger, or who can be scared with the bugbear of despotism proceeding from the President. The privileges and rights of the loyal citizens of the United States were never more secure than at this moment; and never was the determination to protect and defend them against all peril more manifest than in the election of Mr. Lincoln to a second term of office. The good sense of the people understands the matter as Mr. Lincoln himself understands it. "Nor am I able," said he in his letter to the Hon. Erastus Corning and others, on the 13th of June, 1863, "to appreciate the danger apprehended that the American people will, by means of military arrests during the Rebellion, lose the right of public discussion, the liberty of speech and the press, the law of evidence, trial by jury, and *habeas corpus*, throughout the indefinite peaceful future which, I trust, lies before them, any more than I am able to believe that a man could contract so strong an appetite for emetics during temporary illness as to

persist in feeding upon them during the rest of his healthful life."

Unquestionably there is matter for difference in respect to many of the acts of Mr. Lincoln's administration. In the pressure of events of a character utterly novel, and involving consequences of the utmost importance, with the need frequently of prompt decision and immediate action upon them, mistakes have been committed, and errors of judgment have occurred, such as were inevitable in a season of such stress and difficulty. Still further, the period has been one full of instruction to every man of candid and intelligent mind. The whole nation has been at school. It has been taught new ideas in respect to duty and to policy. Old ideas have been rudely shaken, and have given way to others more conformed to the necessities and changes of the time. A policy fit for 1861 is not the policy for 1864. Principles do not change, but their application to events is continually changing. The consistent statesman is not he who never alters his policy, but he who, adapting his policy to shifting exigencies, is true always to the fixed north star of duty and of principle. Above all, in a period of social convulsion, a true and honorable consistency does not consist in adherence to the details of any preconceived plan or system, but in the ready adjustment of its details to the novel demands of the time; and it is this consistency which, in our opinion, Mr. Lincoln has eminently displayed. In his Inaugural Address, he said, "The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and posts belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere." But he also said, "I hold that, in contemplation of universal law and of the Constitution, the union of these States is perpetual." And in support of this fundamental doctrine, his declaration that "there will be no using of force against or among the people anywhere" was rightly and consistently disregarded, and the tramp of the soldier in every seceded State was its commentary.

On no subject have the sentiments of the Northern people undergone a more entire change since 1861, than on the ques-

tion of the right of the general government to interfere with slavery. Not only is their view of the relation of the Constitution to slavery essentially modified, but within the powers with which the Constitution invested the President has been found the arm from which slavery has received its death-blow. The idea of being called upon to use this arm had never crossed the mind of Mr. Lincoln up to the time of his inauguration. He, in common with the mass of the people of the North, was ready then to guarantee to the people of the South protection for slavery within its existing limits. His oath as President to support the Constitution was interpreted by him as depriving him of all lawful right to interfere, directly or indirectly, with the institution of slavery in the States where it then existed. But the progress of events taught him, as it taught the people, that slavery, like every other partial interest or relation, was subordinate to the general interest; that it was subject to the Constitution; that if, to preserve the Union, slavery must be destroyed, the Constitution, which formed the bond of the Union, could not be pleaded in its defence. His course on the matter was in accordance with the fundamental principles of his political creed. Other men, no doubt, earlier reached the same conclusions at which he arrived, and urged upon him the adoption of the policy which he at length pursued. But on them the responsibility of decision and action did not rest; and Mr. Lincoln's deep sense of that responsibility caused him to seem to reach slowly the point to which more eager and less considerate men had long before attained.

Moreover, in Mr. Lincoln's position, the conflicting interests and the contradictory opinions of men of the loyal, and especially of the Border States, have made it a task of extreme difficulty and delicacy to learn the true sentiment of the North. To unite and to keep united the people of the loyal States in the support of the administration, so far as such union was possible, was Mr. Lincoln's arduous task. On this union depended the power to carry on the war. Every delay, every disaster to our arms, every incompetence, every personal disappointment and private grief, every wounded vanity, all partisan hates and jealousies, every danger, in fine,

against which an American statesman could be called on to provide, lay in his path. He could not, if he did his duty, expect either wholly to please his friends or to win his enemies; he could not force compliance with his views, or insist on the adoption of measures which he might esteem desirable or essential. His character was not fitted to secure a strong body of personal supporters. He stood comparatively isolated and alone; and his duty was to save the Union, and to save it with its institutions sound and whole. Popular opinion was changing and developing rapidly. Mr. Lincoln's own views were changing and advancing with it. But it was impossible to make sure of popular opinion, so diverse were the voices of the people. "I am approached," said Mr. Lincoln, "with the most opposite opinions and advice, and that by religious men, who are equally certain that they represent the Divine will. I am sure," he added, with humorous irony, "that either one or the other class is mistaken in that belief, and perhaps in some respect both." The elements in the problem given him to solve were of the most complex and difficult character. He might well be pardoned, if, doing his best, he had failed. But he has not failed. Sagacious beyond most men in his estimate of popular opinion, he has the intuition of a genuine statesman as to the manner and the moment of its use. He has not fallen into the common error of politicians, of mistaking a gust of enthusiasm or of passion for the steady wind of conviction, or of fancying a thunder-squall of violence to be a black storm of gathered discontent. He has not sought to control events, but he has known how to turn events, among the most important of which are to be reckoned the moods of a great people in time of trial, to the benefit of the cause of the nation and of mankind.

In regard to the question of slavery and emancipation, he has, fortunately for the country and for history, given a statement of the principles and motives of his policy in a brief letter, which must take rank as one of the most important documents in the remarkable series of state-papers which he has published since his accession to the Presidency. It is a production of the highest interest, not only as containing the authentic record of his opinions and his action on this great

topic, but as exhibiting the frankness, candor, integrity, and sagacity which are the distinguishing traits of his personal character. We cite this letter in full, because, in the crowd of matters of public concern, it has not received the attention it deserves as an exposition of the President's policy, and because it is well fitted to inspire confidence in the wisdom of its author.

"EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON,
April 4th, 1864.

"A. G. HODGES, Esq., Frankfort, Ky.

"MY DEAR SIR:— You ask me to put in writing the substance of what I verbally stated the other day, in your presence, to Governor Bramlette and Senator Dixon. It was about as follows:—

"I am naturally antislavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel; and yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it in my view that I might take the oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times and in many ways; and I aver that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery. I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution to the best of my ability imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that government, that nation, of which that Constitution was the organic law. Was it possible to lose the nation, and yet preserve the Constitution? By general law, life and limb must be protected; yet often a limb must be amputated to save a life, but a life is never wisely given to save a limb. I felt that measures, otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution through the preservation of the nation. Right or wrong, I assumed this ground, and now avow it. I could not feel that to the best of my ability I had even tried to preserve the Constitution, if, to save slavery, or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of government, country, and Constitution altogether. When, early in the war, General Frémont attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not then

think it an indispensable necessity. When, a little later, General Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected, because I did not yet think it an indispensable necessity. When, still later, General Hunter attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come. When, in March and May and July, 1862, I made earnest and successive appeals to the Border States to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition; and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter. In choosing it, I hoped for greater gain than loss; but of this I was not entirely confident. More than a year of trial now shows no loss by it in our foreign relations, none in our home popular sentiment, none in our white military force, — no loss by it anyhow or anywhere. On the contrary, it shows a gain of quite a hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen, and laborers. These are palpable facts, about which, as facts, there can be no cavilling. We have the men; and we could not have had them without the measure.

“ ‘ And now let any Union man who complains of the measure test himself by writing down in one line that he is for subduing the Rebellion by force of arms; and in the next, that he is for taking three [one?] hundred and thirty thousand men from the Union side, and placing them where they would be but for the measure he condemns. If he cannot face his case so stated, it is only because he cannot face the truth.’ ”

“ I add a word which was not in the verbal conversation. In telling this tale, I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years’ struggle, the nation’s condition is not what either party or any man desired or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North, as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new causes to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

“ Yours, truly,

“ A. LINCOLN.”

This excellent letter, in giving the grounds and explaining the motives of Mr. Lincoln’s action, affords a complete vindication from the complaints that have been frequently brought

against him by the thoughtless and impatient, by the men of ardent temperament and of limited views, for not advancing more rapidly, for not giving more speedy effect to a supposed popular sentiment, for not adopting what is called a more decisive policy, for being content not to lead the people, but to wait for their progress. These men have desired him to anticipate public opinion, and in doing so they have failed to consider how slow, even in times like these, is the maturing of popular conviction, and how liable to be checked by over-hasty action. The vicissitudes of war produce a frame of mind in which the feelings of the masses of men are likely to overshadow their reason, and in which, consequently, there is a constant danger of the rise of reactionary opinions and measures. Political action based on the feeling of a moment is liable to speedy reversal. A policy that is to be lasting must rest on solid and well-formed convictions. The art and the duty of a true statesman in a republic is not to act on what the people ought to wish and to think, but to adopt the best course practicable in accordance with what they actually do wish and think. It is not to attempt to exercise a despotic leadership, but to divine and to give force to the right will of the nation.

Above all, in such circumstances as those in which the American nation has been placed by the Rebellion, it is of infinite importance that it should learn to conduct its own affairs, trusting to no one man to deliver it from peril, and yielding to no temptation to give up its own power into the hands of any, even the wisest dictator. A Cromwell, if a Cromwell had been possible, would have been an unspeakable calamity to the nation during the past four years. A free and intelligent people has no place for, and no need of, a Cromwell. It must be its own ruler and its own leader. This war has been a war of the people for the people; and in order to reach a successful conclusion, — the only conclusion worthy of a self-sustained and self-governed nation, a conclusion which should be a final settlement of the quarrel, — it must be fought out by themselves. They are to save themselves, not to look to any man for their salvation. The nation is already lost when it seeks relief from its own duties by shifting them on to the shoulders of a leader. And in this view Abraham Lincoln has well fulfilled the duty imposed

on him, not seeking to control opinion any more than to control events, but seeking to make use of both in accordance with the laws by which they are governed, so as to secure the working out of the great problem of national salvation. "I have understood well," said he, "that the duty of self-preservation rests solely with the American people."

The powers granted by the people to the President are limited, not unlimited and arbitrary. He has no right to compel the nation against its will. He has no right to lead where they are averse to follow. In the use of these limited powers, there is indeed large room for individual judgment. The President, by virtue of his position and office, may exercise a direct and most powerful influence on the formation of public opinion. He is bound, as the chief executive officer of the nation, to make the best use of this influence, as of every means which the people place in his hands, for the execution of its will. And we believe, with General Sherman, that Mr. Lincoln has done the best he could.

In the estimate and enumeration of the grounds of confidence in the President, it is not enough to consider his political principles and the acts of his administration, but we must also take into view the predominant qualities of his moral nature. Some of those qualities have been incidentally touched upon in what precedes. There is no need to insist on the commonplace, that a strong and virtuous moral character is the only absolute foundation of reliance on a man, whatever be his position. But there is need of considering that a special class of moral virtues is requisite in a statesman, and that, without them, the highest intellectual qualities may be exercised merely to the danger of the state. It was one of the curious features of the late political campaign, that a very wide confusion on this matter seemed to prevail among the supporters of General McClellan. They dwelt upon his moral excellence, apparently unmindful that general moral excellence is no indication of a man's fitness for administrative, judicial, or executive office, but that that fitness depends upon a combination of special moral qualities with special intellectual faculties.

To draw the portrait of the ideal statesman is no easy task. Nor is it needed here. But among his prime virtues would be

reckoned integrity of purpose, firmness of will, patience, fidelity, humanity, and a deep sense of accountability for his conduct, not only to his nation, but to God. These virtues Mr. Lincoln has displayed. From the beginning, his integrity of purpose has been plain to men not blinded by prejudice or passion. He has never lost sight, in selfish objects or pursuits, of the duty which had been laid upon him, — “a duty which,” as he said, in words of grave prescience, to his fellow-citizens of Springfield, on taking leave of them, — “a duty which is perhaps greater than has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. . . . I feel that I cannot succeed without the same Divine aid which sustained him, and on the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support.”

Deliberate in forming his opinions, feeling the vast burden of responsibility resting upon him, he has welcomed counsel and suggestion, listened to men of all parties, made up his judgment carefully, and then acted, and stood firm. Patient under circumstances that might well have provoked impatience, and with men who have baffled the best designs by wilfulness or incompetence, he has preferred to be charged with slowness, rather than by rashness to run the risk of doing injustice, or of endangering the real interests of the country. Faithful to his paramount duty to maintain and preserve at once the Constitution and the integrity of the Federal Republic, he has acted under “a sense of responsibility more weighty and enduring than any which is merely official.” A conscientious purpose to perform his duty he has declared to be the key to all the measures of administration which have been adopted ; and we believe that it will be the key of the future, as it has been of the past.

The results of the policy pursued by Mr. Lincoln during his administration thus far are its own best justification. The verdict of the future is not to be foreshown. But there can be little doubt that history will record the name of Abraham Lincoln as that of a pure and disinterested patriot. She may find in his course many errors ; she may point out in his character many defects ; she will speak of him as a man who had to contend against the disadvantages of imperfect culture, of self-education, and of little intercourse with men of

high-breeding. But she will speak also of the virtues which the hard experience of early life had strengthened in him ; of his homely sincerity and simplicity ; of his manly frankness and self-respect ; of his large, humane, and tender sympathies ; of his self-control and good temper ; of his truthfulness and sturdy honesty. She will represent him as actuated by an abiding sense of duty, as striving to be faithful in his service of God and of man, as possessed with deep moral earnestness, and as endowed with vigorous common-sense and faculty for dealing with affairs. She will tell of his confidence in the people, and she will recount with approval their confidence in him. And when she has told all this, may she conclude her record by saying that to Abraham Lincoln more than to any other man is due the success which crowned the efforts of the American people to maintain the Union and the institutions of their country, to widen and confirm the foundations of justice and liberty, on which those institutions rest, and to establish inviolable and eternal peace within the borders of their land.

- ART. II. — 1. *Christianity and Emancipation ; or the Teachings and the Influence of the Bible against Slavery.* By the REV. JOSEPH P. THOMPSON. New York. 1863. 8vo. pp. 86.
2. *De l'Abolition de l'Esclavage Ancien au Moyen Âge, et de sa Transformation en Servitude de la Glèbe.* Par J. YANOSKI. Paris. 1860. 8vo. pp. 154.

WE have thought that the attention of our readers might perhaps be not unprofitably bestowed upon a brief review of the relations between the early Christian Church and slavery. These relations have been strangely misrepresented. It is true that materials are wanting to supply all the details of the subject ; but enough has been preserved to enable any honest and impartial writer to arrive at correct conclusions as to the manner in which the fathers of the first five centuries